

How Do I Say It?

First, it is important to know that this brochure was written by a parent of a child with hearing loss.

Second, recognize that too many babies and toddlers have spent soundless years because a well-meaning nurse, doctor, or other medical team member reassured them and suggested they just wait. You can prevent such tragedy by encouraging a hearing test whenever a parent is concerned. No child is too young to test. And some losses develop after infants pass a test.

When you fear hurting parents with sad news, remind yourself that you hurt them more by holding back.

**Wishing doesn't help.
Accurate testing does.**

Parents want to know. So swallow your fear, put yourself in the place of the parents, and provide them what you are uniquely qualified to present:

- Your conviction that the earlier a child is identified and aided, the better they can work around the hearing loss.
- Assurance that the more parents know, the better they will equip their child.
- Connections to other professionals whom you have already checked out, such as:
 - An excellent audiologist
 - A speech and language professional (SLP)
 - An ear doctor (ENT or otologist)
 - An early intervention specialist

Learn more

... about Newborn Hearing Screening, Diagnostics, and Intervention at:

www.infanthearing.org agbell.org
babyhearing.org johntracyclinic.org
hearingexchange.com cuedspeech.org
listen-up.org deafchildren.org

Tennessee Newborn Hearing Screening Program:
(615) 741-8530 or (615) 262-6160

Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS): (800) 852-7157

Tennessee Infant Parent Service (TIPS): (865) 579-3099

Children's Special Services (CSS) or Parents Encouraging Parents:
(615) 741-8530

Family Voices:
(615) 383-9442 or
(888) 643-7811



State of Tennessee
Department of Health
Newborn Hearing Screening
Cordell Hull Building, 5th Floor
425 Fifth Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37247-4750

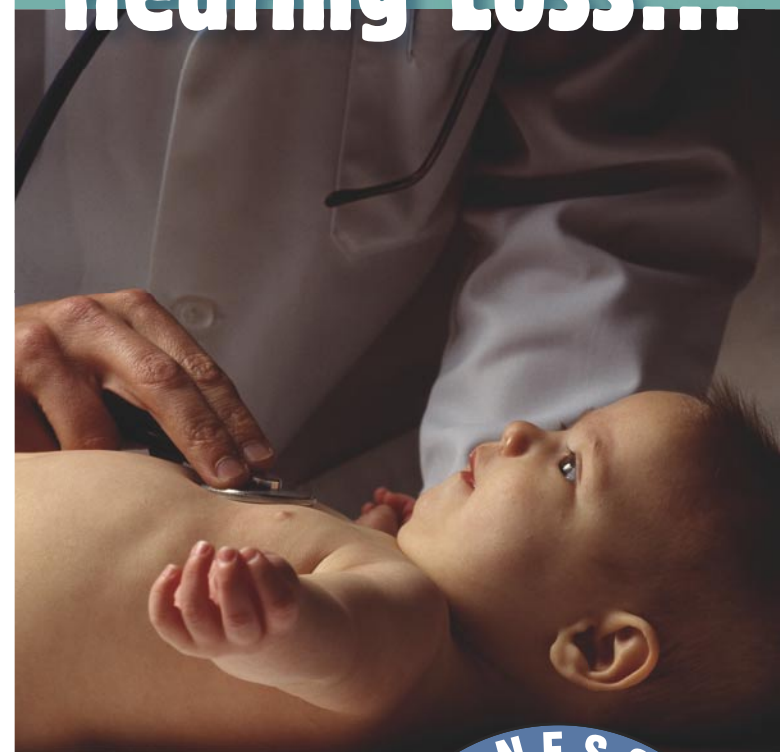
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FOR PHYSICIANS, NURSES,
AUDIOLOGISTS, AND OTHER
HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Talking With Parents About Hearing Loss...



Equip parents with:
Information
Web sites
Referrals to other
professionals



In print... By voice... Over and over...

In print...

When you share news with parents that their infant needs further hearing testing after a newborn hearing screen, or that their infant's audiological test results indicate a hearing loss, they may hear nothing after your first sentence. Make sure to send printed information along, such as the brochure, **“So Your Baby Has A Hearing Loss”** (available from AGBell at info@agbell.org or by calling 202-337-5220) or the brochure, **“Your Baby Has Been Referred for More Hearing Testing”** (available from the Tennessee Department of Health). Referring your parents to Web sites such as babyhearing.org is another way to provide an excellent source of printed information.

Other information to provide includes the following:

- A copy of the newborn hearing screen results;
- A copy of the child's audiogram, with explanations;
- Names of pediatric audiologists and speech pathologists with contact information;
- Names of pediatric otologists, otolaryngologists, and ENTs, with contact information;
- * Value of genetic counseling and contact information for the Tennessee Genetic Centers;
- Baby developmental milestones to watch;
- Names of early intervention providers with contact information (see back panel).

By voice...

As a newborn hearing screener, a pediatrician, a speech and language pathologist, or an audiologist, you will have a unique voice. **Don't assume another professional has given certain information.** Repeat whatever you know.

As you speak, give the parents a copy of every record you create or receive, including the results of a hearing screen or audiological report or your own explanatory notes. Explain the record and what it means.

Records help families get the services they need. Encourage them to keep these records in a special file folder at home.

Over and over...

Once parents have had time to think over the information, **they may come back to you and ask questions you have already answered.** That's OK. Answer again with no hint of condescension or impatience. **New information always takes time to process.**



Just say it!

Parents don't want or need to be pampered or led by the hand. They simply need the information. So with compassionate directness, just say what needs saying. Don't try to make it all OK. It's not! Many babies have been hurt because professionals held back information.

But do assure them there is always something they can do to help their baby. Here are two examples:

For Screens:

“Mrs. Jones, the hearing screen indicates that your baby may have a hearing loss. If we can confirm loss early, there is much we can do to help you and your baby. Here is where to go to get more tests so you can help your baby overcome any loss. Do you have any questions that I can answer at this time?”

(Then give a copy of “Your Baby Has Been Referred for More Hearing Testing.”)

For Tests:

“Mrs. Jones, the tests indicate that your baby likely has a severe hearing loss. It will take some time to find out what hearing aids he needs and what will work best for him. But keep talking to him; in fact talk all the more, because he will learn to use his residual—remaining—hearing as you talk. We will make ear molds today and then have a hearing aid fitting in two weeks. Remember that your baby is not very different from other babies. He simply has to find a way around the hearing loss. So love him and raise him just like any other child. Do you have any questions that I can answer at this time?”